

To: Transportation Committee
From: Pippa Bell Ader
62 Woodside Ave
Westport, CT 06880

RE: HB 5256, AN ACT STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICTS
Public Hearing, Monday, March 7th, 11am.

I am the former vice chair of Sustainable Westport, an active member of the Westport sustainability community and a member of the Westport Bus Facilities Working Group. I am writing in support of HB 5256, AN ACT STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICTS. I believe the consolidation of these 7 transit districts in southwestern CT and another 5+ in the rest of CT would be a step towards a more equitable, economically viable and environmentally sound public transit system.

Economically viable:

A study will no doubt show that the State could save millions of dollars by consolidating transit districts. This would increase the efficiency of money spent throughout the state, access to grants and cost to the tax-payer. As a local example, people in Westport who want to know when a bus is arriving on the Shoreline Route have to check with three different transit districts and there is no real coordinated scheduling system planned for the near future....it appears that it costs too much to integrate the programs of the 3 transit districts.

Environmentally sound:

CT suffers from traffic congestion, but Fairfield County has some of the most severe congestion and poorest air quality in the country*. Efficient access to all forms of public transit is essential to decreasing vehicle miles travelled and greenhouse gas emissions. Lack of coordination between transit districts and poor organizational structure creates barriers and limits the ability to provide more robust services that could help to meet our goal of reducing pollution and greenhouse gases and stemming the increase in global warming.

*<https://www.lung.org/research/sota/city-rankings/states/connecticut/fairfield>

Equitable:

The people who suffer the most from the lack of a robust and integrated public transit services In southwestern CT at least, are low income, particularly minority workers. While Stamford, Norwalk and Bridgeport have systems that focus on access to their Metro North stations and Central Business Districts, this leaves out access to the many smaller job centers within these cities and other job opportunities spread throughout the region. Thus, getting and keeping a job is frequently contingent on access to a car. This form of systemic racism needs to be addressed immediately.

My understanding is that multiple studies have already been done and recommendations made to consolidate the transit districts. The time is NOW to consolidate. Please do not re-invent the wheel! I urge you to study how to get this consolidation done as quickly and efficiently as possible.